



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION May 11, 2005

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack
Mr. Robert Goff
Mr. John Grosvenor, AIA
Ms. Patrice O'Malley Hagan
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Karst Hoogeboom
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Mr. Frederick C. Williamson, Chairman & SHPO

STAFF PRESENT

Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, National Register Assistant
Dr. Richard Greenwood, Principal Historian
Ms. Pamela Kennedy, Deputy Director
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack
Mr. Joseph Dias, representing Mr. Frederick Vincent, Acting Director DEM
Dr. James Garman, NR Review Board
Mr. John O'Brien, Chief of Statewide Planning
Dr. Daniel Snyder
State Building Commissioner
House Finance Committee

GUESTS

Ms. Linda O'Neil
Mr. Richard Youngkin

II. AGENDA

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 9:31 AM, Mr. Williamson, Chairman, presiding.

2. Minutes of April 13, 2005

The Minutes of April 13, 2005 were not available. They will be distributed and approved at the June 8, 2005 meeting.

3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson reported on the April 23, 2005 Statewide Historic Preservation Conference held in Newport. About 500 people attended, and the lectures, tours, and other programs were very successful. Congratulations to Sarah Zurier and other members of the RIHPHC staff for putting on an outstanding conference.

b) Mr. Sanderson reported on completion of restoration of the State Reception Room at the RI State House. Designed by famed architects McKim, Mead & White and opened in 1901, the Rhode Island State House is a nationally significant example of the classical architecture of the "American Renaissance." The State Reception Room, the major public room in the Rhode Island State Capitol, was designed in a lavish Louis XIV style that recalls European staterooms or Newport Mansion ballrooms. The State Reception Room has survived relatively intact. An original marble table and an original set of chairs and settees remain in the room along with Gilbert Stuart's portrait of President George Washington and portraits of General Nathanael Greene and Oliver Hazard Perry.

Furniture: Physical examination and expert paint analysis indicates that the original finish was probably gold gilt. Restoration in 2005 has brought back the original gleaming gold finish using a high quality Dutch metal process.

Fabric and Trim: Historic photographs of the State Reception Room soon after its completion have been enlarged to reveal details of the fabric and trims. Based on careful analysis and examination of "document fabrics" from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was determined that the original upholstery was three-tier cut velvet. The color was crimson "tone on tone," and the fabric would have been woven by hand and hand cut. In 2004 the original fabric was accurately reproduced on a historic loom in France for the machine-production of cut velvet fabric. Research and historic photographs provide sufficient detail to determine that the original trims included bullion fringe with jasmines, gimp trim and guilloche trim which have been carefully reproduced to match the originals. The historical photographs show that the original draperies were made of the same cut velvet material as the upholstery fabric and had similar trims. The 2005 draperies and upholstery match the 1901 originals in every detail.

4. National Register Review Board

Final Approval

Dunmere, Ocean Road, Narragansett

Ms. Kennedy presented information about the nomination. Although the original house does not survive, the gatehouse and historic landscape remain. The original plant material has changed over time and written landscape plans have not been located. However, the original garden structure is well preserved including planting beds, garden walls, and series of formal terraces that step down the hillside and give way to a naturalistic landscape near an artificial pond near the shore of Narragansett Bay. Commissioners discussed use of indigenous and exotic plant materials. Dr. Malone expressed interest in garden's hydrologic engineering system. Commissioners recommended that the nomination document include a site plan showing the site of the original house, a photograph of the original house, and information about original and existing plant materials. Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Ms. Hagen, the Commission

VOTED unanimously to approve the nomination.

Preliminary Approval

Franklin Farm, Cumberland

Dr. Greenwood presented information and views of the farm complex that includes a late Greek Revival farmhouse, and early English barn with later 19th-century additions, an early 20th-century dairy barn and milk room, fields and stone walls. A former privy and springhouse do not survive. The farm was in operation until 1994, and today the Town of Cumberland Land Trust owns most of the land. Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Dr. Morenon, the Commission

VOTED unanimously preliminary approval for the nomination.

Greene Village Historic District

Ms. Kennedy presented information and views of this mid 19th-century crossroads village settled after the arrival of the railroad in 1854. Many of the buildings have alterations to lesser or greater degree, but it appears that few buildings have been removed altogether. During discussion it was noted that the issue of integrity of the historic structures must be addressed in a potential nomination. Following further discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Ms. Hagen, the Commission

VOTED unanimously preliminary approval for the nomination.

5. Discussion of State Preservation Grant Regulations

Mr. Sanderson distributed copies of the draft regulations. As authorized at the Commission's April 13 meeting, the draft-revised regulations will be published for public comment and scheduled for public hearing. The major changes are as follows:

1) There is a new definition for "Public Historic Site." This change is required by the 2004 Bond Issue language approved by the voters. The intent is that a small number of historic buildings actively used for public events may be eligible for grants even if the building is not a museum or cultural art center. When evaluating a grant application for "Public Historic Site" the quality and frequency of the public events held at the site will be important and also the extent to which the site is "representative of the community's heritage." A historic town hall is one example; another example could be a historic library building. However, a historic building used occasionally by a private organization for events for its own members might not fully meet the definition of "Public Historic Site."

2) Under Rule 7 (c) evaluation (5) planning, language has been added to give priority to communities with a state-approved-housing plan. This change is required by a recent state law.

3) Under Rule 8 (A) the maximum grant amount has been reduced from \$200,000 to \$100,000. The Commission has awarded very few grants larger than \$100,000, and the 2004 Bond is allocated in three \$1 million amounts. A grant of \$200,000 would be twenty percent of the total available. By reducing the maximum grant amount, the regulations will more accurately indicate to applicants the realistic maximum amount that they should request.

During discussion, Commissioners suggested that the definition of "Public Historic Site" refer to "A historic structure open to the general public that is used principally for events and activities of broad community interest and that is widely recognized as being representative of the community's heritage. At a minimum, the public historic site must be open to the public twelve (12) days per year." Following discussion, on a motion by Ms. Hagen, seconded by Dr. Onorato, the Commission

VOTED to authorize publication of the draft revised regulation.

6. Other Business: There was no other business.

7. Next meeting date: The next regular meeting of the Commission will be Wednesday, June 8, 2005.

8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Minutes recorded by,

Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director